

# THE UNDERSTANDING LIFE

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# THE UNDERSTANDING LIFE

Three Lectures by  
CLARA M. CODD

- I. The Other Side of Death
- II. The Meaning of Pain
- III. Spiritual Training in Daily Life

THE THEOSOPHICAL PRESS  
Wheaton, Ill.



To Joseph and Ruth Bibby, with affection  
and gratitude

NOTE: This little book is compiled  
from articles which have appeared  
in *Bibby's Annual*.

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AMERICAN THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

THE OTHER SIDE  
OF DEATH



## I

## THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

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## THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

broken memory, unpunctuated by nights of seeming blankness, and destroying for him forevermore the great illusion called Death.

The invisible world thus revealed is still material, though formed of a matter finer and different to physical matter, and by reason of its subtlety more completely permeating and pervading this everyday world of ours than water permeates something which is wet.

By the help of seers, who have recorded their observations with the accuracy and patience of true scientific research, let us try to summarize the main mass of information coming through, to achieve, if possible, a slight yet coherent mind-picture of conditions upon the other side.

## SCENERY OF THE NEXT WORLD

The matter of the next world permeates, interpenetrates, and enormously extends beyond the matter of this present globe. Hence, the "lower realms" of that world are spatially below the surface of the earth, higher ones co-terminous with physical plane life, and therefore, reproducing its scenery in replica, and the highest out of touch with the earth plane altogether. Conditions vary in these states from the darkness and dimness of the lowest to the indescribable glory, responsiveness and light of the highest, and, roughly speaking, are comparable to the old-time classification of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, save that even from the lowest depths progression is possible—nay, certain—and there

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is a continual drive upwards as a man lays on one side his worst self after death.

The light of the next world does not come from anything comparable to our sun on the physical plane, but is diffused through the whole plane, radiating, according to the density or subtlety of the vehicle, from every form—animal, plant, or man. Hence the lower spheres are dark, the higher unearthly in brilliance and beauty. The mediæval alchemists called its matter “astral” or luminous.

### INHABITANTS

A large proportion of its inhabitants are those we speak of on this side as the “dead.” They are not dead but infinitely more alive, because now functioning in a body which can express enormously more vividly all the powers of life. One of the first sensations of those newly passed over is often a feeling of intense relief and lightness. Tied to an aching, ailing body, we think *we* are tired and ill, but only the garment of the body suffers those things when injured, or wearing out.

Another large part of the after-death world consists of non-human beings belonging to another order of evolution, perhaps best described by the old word angels, although the lower ranks of intelligence amongst them more aptly fit the cognomen fairy.

The angel is the brother-line of evolution to man’s; he is the son who did not go into

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“the far country” in that glorious epitome of human evolution, the story of the Prodigal Son.

Another division of the next world’s inhabitants consists of people still alive on this side, who visit the surrounding sphere whilst their bodies are asleep, for the worlds of sleep and death are partly the same world. When a man sleeps he dies in a small measure, so it will not be an entirely unknown country to most of us for we are already familiar with it by journeyings at night. There we often meet again, because we are temporarily in the same condition, those whom we falsely call the dead. Sometimes we bring back cloudy, vague remembrances and call them dreams. There are many kinds of dreams and only some are true memories, yet always we may seek and find our beloved dead through the gateway of sleep, and even if we remember nothing in the morning bring back a sense of comfort.

Sleep and death have often been compared, but there is this difference between them: when a man sleeps he is connected with his body by a continual flow of life, let us call it a magnetic thread. It acts, too, as a telegraph wire. When some one touches or speaks to him here, back he comes to his body and the man “awakes.” But when the man has fallen asleep for the last time, that magnetic thread is severed, the “silver cord” is “loosed,” and return is no more possible. Then the little lives which make up that won-

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derful colony, the body, having lost their inner ruler, the coordinating power which held them together, run riot on their own account, and bring about the process called disintegration.

### CLOTHES, HOUSES, FOOD

Do we wear clothes, live in houses, eat food, on the other side? This is a question often asked, and the answer is that the other life is a glorified, idealized extension of this one, wherein a man carries on with far wider scope and power all his present interests and occupations which are related to his life as a *soul*, leaving with the body those necessities which concern the body alone. Hence, clothing is worn, not because the psychic body requires to be kept warm, but, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle puts it, because "there is no reason why modesty should disappear with our new forms." It is formed by thought and desire, and whilst a man at first will think of himself as attired in the clothes he has been used to during his last earth life, as he gains freedom and power his artistic sensibilities begin to mould his garments. They are not required for warmth because psychic matter is impervious to "heat" and "cold." According to its own laws, it does not expand with heat nor contract with cold. Mental and emotional pleasure and pain may be experienced in a far greater degree upon the other side than here, but not physical pleasure and pain, except in so far as they are acted out again in thought from remembrance.

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And there are houses too; houses and towns that are as solid-looking and real to the dwellers in the invisible as ours are to us. It is useful to remember that to some one on the other side glimpses of this side appear unreal and transparent.

Food is not required by the psychic body, but often the newly-dead person will carry over the habit of hunger, in which case food will be created and taken, but the habit is soon lost.

### OCCUPATIONS

These, as before stated, inasmuch as they are emotional and mental, are the same as on earth, enormously extended and improved. The mental and emotional contents of the previous earth-life is the groundwork upon which the wonderful structure of the after-life is built, hence the immense importance of living at our highest and biggest during "life," so that the after-life may be as rich and full of varied experience as is possible to each one of us individually as yet. No occupation has such infinite and glorious possibilities on that other side as the simple yet eternally varied one of helping others. The lovers and helpers of others are the happiest of all on the other side, and the most intensely busy, in a body which can no longer know fatigue.

The weary round of "earning a living" for ourselves and others ceases to be a necessity there. Leisure to dream, to enjoy, to learn, becomes the gift of all men. The "trivial

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round, the common task," of earth had its divine uses here for the schooling of the soul, and the more they are even now realized as means for "room to deny ourselves, a road to bring us daily nearer God," the more far-reaching and glorious their fruitage and compensation after death.

Books are there, vast libraries. Art, music, science are there unfolded and studied in far fuller, more extended measure.

### THE HOUR OF PASSING

When the hour strikes that shall call a man home from the schoolhouse of God's Universe, a peculiar psychological experience is always his. The events of his past life come up before his vision in due order and sequence. All sorts of long-forgotten happenings creep out of the dark, and the long chain of events shine out in true proportion. Quitting the arena of the world's activities, the soul turns on the threshold and beholds the chapter of life now closing, and in that rapid survey understands more clearly all that the One Actor would fain have done through him. Religious systems have always inculcated that quiet prayer and loving aspiration should be the endeavor of those who watch beside the bedside of the dying, for that solemn moment should never be disturbed by what is seen to be—when we understand—surely selfish grief. When he awakes in the other world he will see a friend, for the passing soul is met by someone known and beloved.

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### CONDITIONS IMMEDIATELY AFTER PASSING

The conditions in which a man finds himself after death are exactly dependent upon the kind of thoughts and feelings he has had during life. As food feeds the physical body, so is the inner man built up by thoughts and feelings, the lower thoughts and emotions bringing about a densification and darkening of the "shining self," the higher qualities making its appearance wonderfully luminous and beautiful. This densification is strikingly produced by the three sins of the flesh, drunkenness, gluttony and sensuality, and by cruelty, worst sin of all, because it is the sin against the fundamental law of love. Let us take the most unhappy conditions first. Remember, that a man is the same man the day after death as the day before, with the same thoughts, the same desires. If he died full of sensual craving, thoughts of cruelty and hate, those desires will be still present with him, heightened and not lessened, because the feelings are now working through subtler and more responsive media than the physical organs, *but* with the physical body he will have lost the instrument of gratification. There burns, therefore, within him the terrible craving of unsatisfied desire, and seers, observing this, have not inaptly likened this state to the burning in "flames of Hell." There is no eternal hell in all God's Universe, that is a nightmare born in the West from the loss of the great truth of Reincarnation, but there is a state

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that is more properly described by the Roman Catholic's idea of Purgatory, the place of purification, of which fire has always been the symbol. But like all fires that cannot be fed, after a time the cravings die down, and set the man free to find his consciousness opening out in a much more beautiful region of the universe. If we refuse to feed the fires of wrath and lust on this side, Nature will not have to do it for us on the other.

Again, those who on this side of things lived absorbed in purely selfish schemings, will find in the intermediate world, immediately after death, a period of darkness and confusion greeting them. Man's prisons are all self-made, and there is no prison like the dark cell of a narrow mind and a selfish heart. By pain must such a one break his way out, for pain is God's way of teaching him that caring for the good of others is the true path of life, and self-sacrifice, not self-gratification, the law of evolution for the eternal man.

But for those amongst us who lead decent, kindly lives, no such terrible ordeal is in store. Yet even amongst such there is often a temporary period of what is best described as ennui, or monotony. If on this side a man's interests have been mostly centred around things that have no real significance in life, he will find there is no scope for these upon the other side, and it will naturally take some time before he adjusts himself to truer views. But if his interests lie in the

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direction of the worlds of thought and the higher emotions, and any of the different spheres of human helpfulness in action, a world of entralling interest opens out before him, for with the added powers belonging to consciousness working in the subtler regions, these things acquire additional wonder and delight.

## THE TRUE MEANING OF HEAVEN AND HELL

Heaven and hell are really states of consciousness. The very derivation of the words would show us that. Hell, in its Teutonic root, means "separated off," out of contact, and what greater hell can we imagine than isolation, pure and complete? How many of us build our own prisons, "helled in" as we are by the iron bars of narrow thoughts and unresponsive hearts? Yet from that prison can no man set us free, until we try to break down the bars ourselves. Heaven means the "sky," illimitable expansion. It is the converse of the misery of hell. It means ever-increasing contact with, ever-widening response to, all that lives.

## THE HEAVEN-WORLD FINALLY REACHED BY ALL

Sooner or later, however, very soon to the noble and pure, but inevitably to all, comes the moment when all that is tinged with selfishness, and therefore impure, has dropped away. Man, in his true nature, is rooted in Divinity, and in his *deepest* self is always

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one with Love, and Truth and Beauty. And so it comes about, that one day after death the man "awakes" unto himself, and with that true awakening is born the great consciousness known as Heaven. It brings intensest bliss, for man is only truly happy when here, or hereafter, he is one with God within himself. That bliss is foreshadowed, ever so faintly, yet unmistakably, in all the moments when wrapped in the contemplation of that which to us is true, beautiful, or beloved, we find therein a greater and a lovelier life. The seeds that grow up and flower in the heavenly life are sown now, in all the unselfish, beautiful thoughts, aspirations, and deeds of life. Four seeds there are, one or more of which every man sows, and gathers therefrom the flowers which make for him heaven after death.

And one is *love of relations and friends.*

There is no man, however degraded or abandoned, who has not at one moment in his life loved something other than himself, and since he has loved, so must the flower of love greet him sometime upon the other side. There, in that state, we shall find ourselves surrounded by all those whom we have ever loved, whether they are in the possession of a physical body or not, for on the deepest side of us we are always in that world. "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father in Heaven," said the great Teacher.

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Here lies the true communion of spirit, for which the methods of communion obtaining in the earth-world, and the intermediate state, are only clumsy makeshifts. Here are no veils to hide us man from man. And neither here, nor on earth again, are there any real separations. Drawn by the strong cords of love, we meet again and again, in different guise, so that we may learn to love in all the ways of love, to discover in the end, sometimes by pain and seeming loss, the One Who through them has been teaching us His love.

Another seed is *love of God*; not that which sometimes passes for such, narrow-hearted churchianity, and more or less pietistic convention, but the natural uprising of the human heart towards a Divine Ideal, the longing after communion therewith, the living of all life in the light of, and in the name of, such a thought of the Divine made manifest. Here a wonderful reward comes to the faithful devotee. The God whom he has worshipped, with love and service, will come to him in the form in which he has pictured Him; that which all life through dwelt in the heart as an adored ideal in Heaven becomes an objective reality. Men picture the heart of the world in many forms, but it is everywhere the same Lord. "However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is mine." The great Christ is a Real Presence, an ever-living Embodiment there, filling

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that world and this, all the time, with the unseen glory of His ever-abiding presence and love. He is the Master of all that lives, Jew and Greek Christian and non-Christian, men and animals and plants, God's Representative to men. Yet even He was once long ages ago a man, climbing the golden stairs from savagery to Divine humanity even as we.

*The third seed.* As some people are always looking upwards to the One, indicating the temperament of the religious man, the devotee, so other people are always looking downwards over the Many, the temperamental characteristic of the humanitarian, the philanthropist. Yet it is only another way of looking at the same thing, for to love humanity is also to love God. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me."

Wonderful, indeed, is the reward in Heaven of those who love mankind. To them come the great Guardians of the Race, the men made perfect in wisdom and in love, Who watch and guide, unseen, the footsteps of all living things upon this world. These teach and bless the man who loves and serves his fellows, that he may return to earth with greater wisdom, with greater opportunity to serve; for the reward of service is always the larger opportunity to help, the guerdon of love, the coming of many souls for comfort.

One other seed we sow—the seed of *love of truth and beauty*. This it is which makes

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a man follow after the True, whether in scientific or philosophic guise, makes him follow after the Beautiful in sound, in color, in form, in thought. The seeker after Truth there beholds the Laws on which the worlds are founded and the splendor of that perfect order—and what wonder awaits the lover of the Divine in His aspect of Beauty! We know what magic sound and color produce on earth, raising us into an atmosphere of dream and wonder. Yet that is but the palest reflection of what they really are. There the true artist sees what here his highest inspiration did but glimpse for him, and which he could never wholly depict.

These are the four seeds that flower in Heaven: love of friends, love of God, love of humanity at large, love of truth and beauty. For they belong to that which is immortal in man, and what they truly mean, and that which we truly are, "doth not yet appear."

## PROGRESS AND RETURN

Blissful and glorious as is our sojourn in the heavenly places, it is not only a time of rest, it is also a time of intense activity. There all the experiences of life are thought over, dwelt upon, without pain, seen there with so much clearer vision. And that assimilation means increased power, increased insight, when we come back again for another day of life.

We may say that never would we come back to this vale of tears and struggle. But we shall come because in our higher selves

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we desire to come. When the experiences of the immediately preceding earth life are all assimilated and transmuted into knowledge and power, the hunger of the soul for further growth will manifest itself. And as the hour for the new incarnation approaches, the soul will see, in the higher reaches of the heaven-world, a momentary vision of the immortal purpose of life and growth through successive embodiments upon earth. The coming "day" will unfold before him, and the clearer his "remembrance" when once again immersed in brain and body, the truer and the more purposeful the succeeding life.

Three things there are to remember for those whose hearts are bowed with the pain of the loss of a dear one passed beyond. *He is more alive than ever he was before.* He is not "lying in the grave." Nothing lies there but the cast-off clothing of himself, dear to us still because he wore it, but no longer of any use to him. He is clothed in a body which now knows neither pain nor fatigue, and has entered upon a life far fuller and more radiant than this one of the soul's schooling.

*He has not gone far away.* The world in which he now lives is all around us. We can no longer talk to him in the daytime, but at night, when we ourselves temporarily put off the house of the body, we enter the same world as that in which he now lives, and may commune with him as of old. It does not matter that we mostly do not remember

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on awakening. Love's intention will take us at night, and we shall not mind that the body does not always remember then.

*He is never out of reach of our prayers and thoughts.* Thought is a mighty vibration acting in subtle matter, and whatever we think of we are immediately in invisible contact with. In the world to which he has gone, thoughts and prayers are powerful, beneficent forces, therefore let us send our loved ones loving thought, and happy, selfless prayers for their well-being.

Ah! He that knows need never grieve. Love is stronger than death, unconquerable through all the worlds. When one whom we love is called back again for a while into the glorious surrounding invisible—that “sea of immortality which flows right round the world,” we should try to bid him go with joy, and hold him in eternal remembrance, knowing of a truth that he is not lost to us, never in all the worlds can be, but only gone before. In the immortal words of the poet Shelley :—

“Peace, peace! He is not dead, he doth not sleep—  
He hath awakened from the dream of life.”

And for him the Veil of the Temple has been rent in twain.

## THE MEANING OF PAIN



## II.

### THE MEANING OF PAIN

“Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward,” says that mystical story of the soul’s pilgrimage, the Book of Job. If we could know the beauty and the meaning of Nature’s darkest mystery, if not sorrow, at least its sting, would disappear.

The problems of life, to be even faintly understood, must be viewed from a great standpoint. In the night of time they are rooted, and cannot be judged from the viewpoint of the present hour alone. “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His Way, before the works of old.” Man is not a newly created, arbitrarily dowered being; he is a creature in process of evolution, an ever-progressing, ever-unfolding unit of consciousness. Faint are the adumbrations of the clouds of glory from whence he came, and “it doth not yet appear” what he shall be. But that shall surely be made manifest, even here, as the ages roll by, for not one life but many lives are his; the present span is but one day in the long life through which God’s “increasing purpose” is made known and achieved in him.

*Life is everywhere*, one, eternal and divine; and *Life is ever-unfolding*. The forms in which it clothes itself break and are cast away, but only that the imprisoned life may find expansion, and reclothe itself in ever fairer and more glorious vestments. On the form-side of Nature continual growth and

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destruction are seen, and, viewed alone, may well cause heaviness of heart, but seen as progressive steps up which the undying life ascends to wonder and glory, sorrow is replaced by joy, and we understand the occult saying that, viewed from within, all life is a song. Man, in his deepest nature, is one with the Great Life of the worlds. Sharing that life, he also shares the Divine Purpose. That Will and that Purpose are being wrought out through the ages by, and through, and with, ourselves. "Some call it Evolution, and others call it God." Like a seed planted in the ground, the Divinity in each of us which is most truly ourselves lives and grows upwards. In some it is only germinating; one can hardly see, perhaps, that it is there. In others the green shoot has appeared above the ground; in some—the flower of our race, the men ~~make~~ perfect, and called Divine by lesser men—it has fully flowered, blessing with its fragrance for evermore the souls of men. But that which is seed and bud as yet in us will flower, too, one day, as it has already done in Them. Day after day, in our real life, whereof each day is called a life, it is shone upon by the sunshine of joy, and watered by the rain of tears.

The rain of tears. How shall we understand that?

If we look at the kingdoms below man's, we note how all things move in conformity with the evolutionary purpose manifested as

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the laws of Nature. In the kingdoms above man, again, Unity of Will reigns by conscious intelligences joyfully and voluntarily associating their individual wills therewith. In the intermediate stage of human life, struggle manifests, and the apparent clash of warring wills, because in man *Self-consciousness*, and the power of *Self-determination* towards immortal ends, is being unfolded. He who is to be hereafter a conscious Centre in the Divine Infinitude is now awakening, by many blind gropings and mistaken choosings, the true will within himself. But always his choosings and his willings act under one invariable Law—that whatsoever he chooses shall come to him, that whatsoever he does shall react upon himself. This the Law, inviolable as the heavens, as eternal as Him with Whom there is no shadow of turning.

Now, the operation of immutable law is more or less familiar to us in physical plane matters. We know that, given certain conditions, certain results *must* ensue. This invariable sequence is a necessity if certainty and power are to be attained. But, as yet, such tyros are we in the great art of life, that we have hardly even become conscious of the fact that Law reigns just as firmly, as wonderfully, in the inner realms of our being, the great kingdoms of the heart and mind. There, also, to act with the evolutionary law means health and harmony, to act against, temporary disease, darkness and death.

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So, when a man chooses that which helps the evolutionary will, bliss comes with enlightened choosing; and when he chooses that which is for himself alone, without consideration for the progress and the good of all, misery and darkness follow close upon his heels. Why do all men seek happiness, save that happiness is most akin to their deepest nature, and when a man is *true to himself* peace is in his possession. For God Who is Love is also Bliss, and as water seeks ever its own level, so the Divinity in man seeks ever the love and the bliss which is Himself.

But, assuredly as peace follows upon well-doing, so surely does pain follow in the footsteps of sin. They are not separate, the cause and its *inevitable* result. They are like the two sides of one coin, the two ends of one stick. The Hebrew prophets and teachers understood this so well that in the original of our Old Testament the same word is often used for sin as for the consequences of sin. Says Dr. Hastings:

“Three cognate forms in Hebrew with no distinction of meaning express sin as *missing one's aim*, and correspond to the Greek and its cognates in the New Testament. The etymology does not suggest a person against whom the sin is committed, and does not necessarily imply intentional wrong-doing. The Hebrew word is used for the punishment of sin, as well as for sin itself. . . . This double sense is a witness to the Hebrew view of the close connection between sin and suffering.”

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To sin is very truly to miss the true aim of life, the furthering of the "increasing purpose," the cooperative movement of the whole towards truth and beauty. Yet it must needs be that offenses come; offenses are the mark of the evolution of the will. Only by repeated choosings can the true power of choice emerge, under the operation of the Law which says that what a man soweth that shall he reap; that the measure he metes out to other men shall be measured to him again.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." Upon the stream of time continually we cast, unthinkingly, thought, and word, and deed; and they all come back to us again, sometimes in the same "day" of life, sometimes after "many days." The pain of love scorned is our own denial of love come back to us; the torn heart makes clear to us, by way of personal experience, the sorrow that once we planted in another's soul, that never again in the long future shall our brother men suffer that pain at our hands.

The hypocrisy that self-love had prompted to clothe itself in deeds and words untrue comes back, sometimes long, long afterwards, as the pain of unmerited reproach, of life-long misunderstanding, by others. So is the man taught God's truth that may not be broken. And when blind rage or selfish cruelty defaces the body of a brother man, to the doer thereof comes back, in the long

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future, deformity or terrible disease. By the unfolding of the inner nature the man may now have long transcended the old blind darkness of heart, yet does his ancient sin now find him out, telling in wonderful words the tremendous truth that all life is Divine, God-given, and the body of a man the sacred temple of the highest Spirit. Most terrible of all is the reaction caused by cruelty of the more refined kind, the deliberate torture of another's mind and heart. This shall come back to the perpetrator as a broken mind, an isolated heart. He shall himself be kept captive in all the generous, life-giving forces of his nature, but that terrible prison will be of his own making. Verily, for the God's sake within himself, he shall by no means come therefrom until he has paid, to the uttermost farthing, the debt of injury caused to others.

Again, the opportunities that are denied, what are they but the other side of opportunities let slip at other times? So shall frustration teach us, in the end, how to turn sloth to power of effort and of will.

For what does the One Lover of all men mean by pain, but to draw them thuswise ever nearer to His Heart? The "Man of Sorrows" in each human heart is being made perfect through suffering as was the great archetype of all men, our Elder Brother Christ. With such infinite patience, such tremendous beauty, Love waits the opening of the soul's dim eyes. His hands are strong

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—yet infinitely tender. The beloved is seemingly drawn from us, only that we may discover *Who* it was who smiled at us through the beloved's eyes. He cuts short our ambitions, frustrates our plans. For what end, but that we may find that there is only one Doer, and only one Work, the service of His worlds? And sometimes He overwhelms the mind with doubt and questioning. The old forms, the old beliefs, are shattered, that man, the immortal one, may seek Truth again, and find it in fairer, nobler guise.

And then he speaks to us by the wonderful ways of failure and of shame, that so we may find that strength is not ours but His, to be used for His world and for His people's sake, and never for ourselves, our personal desires and aims. What is the true success but the unconquerable spirit, serene through all eventualities, because born of Himself? Do greatly, He says to us, and, when seeming failure comes, learn to act more wisely still. But it is when the dark cloak of uttermost shame covers a man that the Beautiful becomes most wonderful, most wholly tender. For then He teaches us how beauty and righteousness are not for ourselves alone, are not even ours chiefly that we may have the happiness of being pure and sweet and true, but are His shining through us to illuminate the dark places of the earth. Thus is pride slain that we may learn the purity of heart which never shrinks from anything of shame, the tenderness of mind which sees the sinner and the saint as One.

## THE MEANING OF PAIN

All things shall come one day in the long future; the ideals we long after, the reparations we would make. So shall God the Beautiful give us always the power to rise again, higher and higher, truly on stepping-stones of long-dead selves; so, too, shall He give us once again the other selves that we have treated coldly, blindly, that we may make up to them the need of love and service which was theirs. For all are bound together by golden chains of love, all working hand-in-hand towards far-off Divine events whose coming is pure bliss. We reap peace when we remember that the Divine will is *also ours*, for is He not by us, and in us, also reaping the age-long ripening of a wonder not yet seen? One day, all pain, all evil, will have vanished. Its function will have ceased with us for ever. Evil is but the absence of the good that is yet latent, pain but the Way whereby that glory is born. All men belong to bliss, to wonder, to uttermost loveliness. The flower that is each man's soul grows in God's garden, the garden of the worlds created for him, and the darkest sorrow, the most hideous pain and evil, cannot, in the long run, hinder the final flowering. Let us be glad to suffer, for the guerdon of wisdom and compassion that crowns pain bravely borne. For if we would know the true inwardness of life, it is just that—strength to bear others' burdens, understanding to compassionate and sustain.

SPIRITUAL TRAINING IN  
DAILY LIFE



### III.

## SPIRITUAL TRAINING IN DAILY LIFE

One of the realizations dawning in the new world in the making today is that the spiritual life proper can and should be lived through the round of daily life, in the market place and in the home, in the whirl of social and political change, and that the spiritual man is he who makes one within himself, and in his surroundings, Heaven and earth, God and man, Spirit and Matter. In times long past this attempt at at-onement was made under specially guarded circumstances, within the cloister and the hermitage, and earth was shut away that Heaven might clearer grow. But in this wonderful new day another and nobler generation of spiritual giants are arising who do not deny earth in order that Heaven may come, but who learn to see the light of Heaven, the majesty of the eternal order which is Heaven's first law permeating, enshrinning, bathing, the whole of visible life and nature, and in itself constituting the hidden urge which is slowly bringing life to beatitude and fulfilment.

Psychology is very much in the air, and for purposes of mental apprehension, the component parts of man's complex being are capable of full and varied classification. Simple and true in general outline is the immortal classification of St. Paul—"body, soul and Spirit." The body we know, that "abode" (Anglo-Saxon *bodig*), or dwelling

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place of the man upon earth. The soul (*psyche* in the original Greek) also we are beginning to know something about through the modern science of psychology, and psychical research, both of them attempts to explore and map out the inner, invisible side of man. But the spirit (*pneuma* in the original Greek), what is that? How may we detect the evidence of its functioning? The Spirit is the real man in every one of us, the eternal Son of God, "set up from everlasting . . . or ever the earth was" who "fell" into the cycle of generation in order that he might finally unite in himself Heaven and earth, God and man, becoming, as did the "first-born among many brethren," the Christ, finally "one; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God." And towards this divine consummation he advances day by day on the great evolutionary journey whose "days" are lives upon earth in the working clothes of the body.

That "hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible," Tennyson's "little bit of God in the middle of every one of us" is also a great consciousness, a superconsciousness, the Kingdom of Heaven within us, mounting into which is described by Christian tradition as attaining union with God. The attainment of that state of consciousness is before civilized humanity, whereby it will become spiritual humanity, and the spiritual man antedates the race in

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its achievement by placing his personal will in line with the evolutionary will back of him which is God's. The savage lives largely in the physical consciousness, the needs and desires of the body being his paramount motive for action; the civilized man lives mostly in the psychical or soul self, thoughts and emotion now outweighing physical desires. The Spiritual man proper lives in his spiritual self, which being fundamentally one with God and also with the deepest side of man, provides him with a purpose and outlook wholly different from ours, impersonal and not personal, all-inclusive and not exclusive.

What then is spiritual training? An organized attempt to gradually tune the soul and body to express the spiritual Self, and finally to raise the consciousness into that Self.

Therefore, the man who desires to live the spiritual life strives to realize in thought and action, though not yet in conscious realization, that he *is* the Higher, and not the lower, the *pneuma* and not the *psyche*, Divine and not the human. He learns to look on his soul and body, not as himself, but as instruments of Himself, to be slowly fashioned and perfected for service, God's service in the worlds.

The Body, it is easy to realize that *that* is not ourselves. It is our abode, our dwelling-place, the instrument through which we gather the fruit of life's experience and wherewith we labor, and should be kept clean and fair and healthy.

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The spiritual training of the middle ages often despised the body, kept it undernourished and unclean. The spirituality of more ancient times and of the future treats the body as a valuable instrument to be kept in good condition. Indeed the "brother ass" of St. Francis is better thought of as the horse on which we ride than as a house, for it lives and has a dim consciousness of its own.

How would we treat a valuable horse? Feed it properly, groom it well, and not over-work it. So, ideally speaking, should we deal with our bodies. Find out the laws of healthy physical living and obey them; keep the body and its clothing clean, for spiritual power at the physical level cannot well flow through a soiled channel; and keep it as well groomed as possible. In these days of stress and pressure it is almost impossible not to overwork, but work as far as possible with concentrated leisure, "making haste slowly." Hurry, fuss, haste, is wholly alien to the spiritual life.

Not only does the man who is striving to lead the spiritual life—try to tune and at-one his body, but also all his actions and his environment. Aspiring to become "one with God," he realizes that personal ambition has no longer place with him, he is willing to work anywhere, in any circumstances, knowing that all good work is God's alone, and he the agent of its doing. And because it is God's work, and he the agent of its doing, he tries to do it well, and beautifully. Were

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it the smallest duty, he is an artist in his work. "Whatsoever ye do, do it *heartily*, as to the Lord, and not unto men." When we put our heart into our work, more of the life of the Higher Self comes down into that work, giving it dignity and power.

His day is largely planned. In the spirit of a faithful servant he plans what had best be done in his Master's service, but his will in this respect is like tempered steel, bending but not breaking. "Firm as a rock where right and wrong are concerned, yield always to others in things which do not matter."

And all the people whom he contacts through the day, become to him his Lord's people, beloved of Him, and sent by Him to be served by His servant, with what wisdom, patience, love, that servant can give. Long experience and patient learning must teach us how to serve. It does not mean giving people or doing for them what we think is good for them; nor holding ourselves up, unconsciously or otherwise, as estimable examples; it is sharing our life with them and helping in their way which need not necessarily be ours.

Lastly, he learns to at-one himself with his own destiny or fate. To become "one with God" he must also become one with God's Will as shown in the Laws of Nature governing his personal fate. All that comes, unfortunate or happy, is welcomed with a brave and strong heart. Indeed, he knows that there is no "misfortune" in the great

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Reality, only a way of testing the powers of his soul, a reaction from past mistakes which will bring into expression that beauty in the depths of his soul which hitherto was lying unexpressed, and thereby caused the weakness of the past. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." However great the personal pain, bravely he commits his training unto Him, Whose undying Son he is, knowing that limitation shall turn to wisdom, and pain into the power to help.

Thus does he learn from the great book of life itself. There lie writ the real secrets of occultism and its daily events are the true teachers of the Wisdom. The disciple knows well that through them the Master will lead and teach him, if so be that he is willing to be taught. It is always a helpful practice to set apart a little time, perhaps towards the evening, when we can sit down a few moments in peace, and therein to think over the day just passed trying to distinguish the lesson of its events, what opportunities we had of exercising the powers of the Spirit, love, patience, understanding, strength, and wherein perhaps we failed, and where by that very failure weak spots in the instrument of soul and body stand revealed.

Furthermore, the man of spiritual life tries to differentiate himself from his emotions. What, we might say, are not our feelings us? How can they be? One moment we mount into the skies with joy, the next we are cast down into the hell of depression;

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in the course of one day we are angry, loving, spiteful, generous in turn, happy, unhappy, appreciative, bored. Which of these widely different selves is the real one, which the eternal man? The would-be occultist begins to understand that fundamentally all emotions group themselves into two great categories, those which are on the side of love, and those which are on the side of hate. Those on the side of love are real and eternal, those upon the other transitory, the negative of love which is capable of transmutation. So he strives to practice love, and that includes all selfless admiration.

Seek out the faculty of admiration, appreciation. It exists within us all. We learn to see that which we seek to see. The Beautiful exists in every form that lives, in the heart of the most abandoned sinner, but only the saint can see perhaps so far as that, because the God in him can distinguish the God in all around, no matter how deeply hidden.

The man who desires to transmute his emotional power from the personal to the impersonal level learns by degree to find ever-growing pleasure in the growth of goodness and beauty, through whatever channel, to rejoice in the good deeds of others as if they were his own, to be glad that truth has found a fuller expression through them than as yet through himself, to be joyous that the Beautiful has triumphed and that a brother man, another fragment of "Himself," has

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had the personal happiness of thus co-working with God. "The wise man knows that only God is great, that all good work is done by God alone." In evil moments he realizes that all men have felt as he feels, and that the moment is bringing him understanding of them. When beauty arises in his heart he remembers that now he thinks *with* them towards Beauty and Love.

So, when love is frustrated, denied, the man of spiritual purpose tries to realize that the pain of love unreturned is the sign of the tinge of impurity, *i. e.* selfishness, that still mars its perfect beauty. It still asks what in its Divine Selfhood it will alone give, and receive only that the other may have the joy of giving. So heartbreak is the pain of growing towards that larger loving, and he strives that pain shall render him gentler and not hardened. One day he will realize that nothing can ever escape Love. It is withdrawn that man, who is the Son of God, may find bigger ways of loving, but that which he loved will return to him again and again, until lover and beloved fill the universe and are discovered to be one and all.

"Renunciation" does not mean forced and grudging surrender. It is the outcome of a tremendous trust which can wait until He who took away gives back again in fuller measure. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord."

Lastly, there is the mind to achieve de-

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tachment from and thereby control. This is the most difficult of all. Are not our minds ourselves? Our thoughts not us? Surely the mind is the man, the highest power within him? Truly, thought is the greatest power in Human man, but the spiritual life belongs to the Divine man, the *pneuma* beyond the *psyche* (mind and heart) and the body. How can our minds be us, those minds which change hourly, daily, which as life goes on alter almost entirely sometimes in outlook and perception? What sometimes a man calls his principles are often in reality only a bundle of preconceived opinions, prejudices.

Therefore, one of the first things the would-be controller and developer of his mental faculties tries to do is to free his mind as far as he can of prejudice. Prejudices (*prae judicium*, judgment beforehand) are the result of disobeying the command of the Christ, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." True judgment belongs only to enlightened spiritual perception which is selfless and therefore pure. "Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me." Until the "Christ," or Divine self, is born in a man's consciousness, he cannot truly judge. Up to that moment he can but strive to see fairly by the broken, disintegrating light of the reasoning faculties, and to aid them it is well to study that which is entirely opposed to

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our own convictions, trying sympathetically to see how it is held by others with an intensity of conviction similar to our own. This does not bring about flabbiness of conviction and purpose in the man who is big enough to do it. It makes his own grasp of truth, as he sees it, steadier and surer. Fanaticism belongs to the smaller mind. Equal intensity and one-pointedness belong to the man who has moved further, and he can fight cleanly, because without bitterness and rancor.

The trainer of his mind tries to clarify it by truth, and truth in every small matter in daily life. He rules out the familiar untruth of exaggeration, he does not "think of others what he does not know to be true."

And he strengthens the fibre of his mental capacity by study. What *is* study? Some people will say reading improving books. One may read improving books all day through, and be very little the better for the process. The mind requires feeding like the body, like it preserving health and growth by exercise. If we feed the mind all day, with bulky or indiscriminate food, it will suffer from indigestion, lose all elasticity and vitality. If we neglect to exercise it, it may remember facts, learn to be an excellent reflector of others' opinions and thoughts, but will have lost its own native power to think for itself, to create, to perceive. The man who would keep his mind in good order never neglects to feed and exercise it a little every

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day, and a little every day it is which tells in the long run. All the rest of the day he tries to train it to concentrate its energies on any work in hand, and as soon as that work is over for the day to drop it out of mind at once. Sometimes he relaxes it with a good tale, or music, he does not let it wander to no purpose, which often turns into dangerous purpose.

For the busy person in daily life study might be carried out on some such plan as the following. Determine that not a day shall pass, if possible, that has not devoted at least a quarter of an hour, half an hour is better still, to real mental application. If a certain time can be set apart all the better. For that half-hour's work take a book, a real book full of strong living, noble thought, written by a great thinker who appeals to you. Read it, sentence by sentence, slowly, letting the words "sink in." At the end of each sentence stop, and for a minute or two, think over what you have just read. At the end of the paragraph stop again for a longer time, and in your own words say to yourself, or write as shortly as possible, the central meaning, gist, of what your author was trying to express in that paragraph.

It is obvious that a book thus read will take a long time to finish, but at the end of some time the gain to the reader will become manifest in increased clarity and steadiness of thought, in poise and balance. Not only will he have evolved the capacity to perceive the

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essentials in a book, but he will also find that he is evolving the capacity to seize upon essentials in life, getting a "grip" that is a source of strength to himself and others.

But most of all is spiritual insight attained by the great practice of meditation and contemplation. And to those whose temperament points that way, a great and abiding channel of inspiration may be opened up.

Set apart ten or fifteen minutes every day, preferably in the early morning after rising and before taking any food—meditation must never be attempted within an hour or two after a meal—and, seated comfortably, close the eyes and commence the endeavor to find the pathway to the Holy of Holies within, that center of our being where "the little bit of God in every one of us," the "hidden man of the heart," resides. The place of his abiding is the land of our purest idealizations, and the way thereto may be reached by the pathway of the imagination. Picture it how we will, it does not matter in what form we image it, only that every morning it is the same. To some it will appear as a lovely garden full of flowers, whose scent is the aroma of heart loveliness, to others a lovely mountain top, whereon dwells the sublime and solemn majesty of God. To yet others that innermost shrine may be symbolized as a mossy dell within a wood, a natural temple of trees; to others again as a shrine of unexampled architecture, lit with the soft lights of pictured glass.

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Building round yourself the shrine of your inner self, enter therein and let go. Leave always outside all fret, all jar, all worry. This is your Place of Peace wherein Love dwells and Strength Incarnate. Picture the atmosphere charged with that mighty Love, "in whom we live and move and have our being," feel it permeating, penetrating, surrounding, upholding every fibre, every atom of yourself. Try in true selflessness of spirit, yet in perfect trust, to stand before the Beauty of the Divine Presence everywhere present.

And then picture therein the Lord of your Shrine, that Ideal Man, ever living and ever true, one with God on the side of His Divinity, one with Man on the side of His Manhood, to whose Beauty and Perfection the soul of every man one day in time shall reach. If you be of a Christian church think of the Christ, the Lord of Love, and if of another perhaps the Buddha, the compassionate and wise one, or, if of no church, of the Perfect Man you and the Race aspire to be—all are revelations of one eternal and glorious reality. Picture Him there standing in your shrine, yourself in love and reverence before Him.

Offer to Him the day which lies before you, imagine how He would act in the various circumstances which will, you know, occur. Say to yourself, "This, I do, Lord, in Thy Name and for love of men."

And lastly, before the moment of with-

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drawal comes, bring in thought into His Presence all those you love or fain would help. Thus, will His blessing, in so rich measure, go with yours as you think of them with love. From that communion, every morning growing clearer and more real, you will emerge with peace, with strength untold, and soon the whole day will carry with it some of its glory. And one day there may come to you a wonderful moment. Suddenly, without warning, you will feel yourself in contact, tuned. You will *know* how near is the Divine Life to every one of us, "closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet." And the figure of that visible embodiment of God whom you worship will become to you pregnant with reality, a thin shield which veils a flaming truth.

Would we guard that moment always, and hope for its return, we must carry its power and blessing forth into the world of men, for it is given for their sakes and not for our own, that we may find strength to strengthen and endure.



